UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

PROLOGUE AND EPILOGUE IN OLD FRENCH LIVES OF SAINTS BEFORE 1400

PAUL JOHN JONES

A THESIS

IN ROMANIC LANGUAGES

PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL IN
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PHILADELPHIA
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FOREWORD

This study was begun and completed under the direction of Professor Jean Baptiste Beck. Professor J. P. W. Crawford furnished invaluable criticism at every stage of the work. I am very much in their debt.

Professors de la Fontainerie and Williams of the University of Pennsylvania were good enough to look over the proofs, an ungrateful task for which I now thank them.

I must also thank Canon Louis Saltet of the Institut Catholique de Toulouse for his kind assistance. And I should like to render a salute to the memory of the late Joseph Anglade, Professor at Toulouse, who helped me more than I can say.

This work was finished in 1927 and should be read as of that date.

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CONTENTS

PAGE

Introduction 7

I

Evidence Tending to Show that the Poems Were Designed to be Read Aloud 17

II

Purpose of the Poems 21

III

Introductory Remarks in the Poems 31

IV

References to Sources 36

V

Opposition to Profane Literature 43

VI

The Author and His Profession 48

VII

Personal Indications 60

VIII

General Characteristics 64

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INTRODUCTION

Since the lives of saints in Old French are, in most cases, translations or adaptations of Latin originals, it will be useful to examine briefly these sources and the manner in which they were used. The Latin materials at the disposal of the medieval French hagiographer were abundant; they consisted of martyrologies, passions of martyrs, acts of martyrs, passionaries, lives of saints, legendaries, and the information scattered in the works of such writers as Eusebius, whose Ecclesiastical History was translated into Latin by Rufinus of Aquileia.

The martyrology was a list of the names of martyrs, the dates on which their memory was celebrated, and the place of their burial; it served the obvious purpose of a liturgical calendar, and, as such, was soon filled out by the notation of other liturgical feasts which had nothing to do with the martyrs. Originally only a bare list of names, dates, and places, as in the pseudo-hieronymian versions, it was later expanded to what is generally called the historic martyrology, that is, it gave with each name a résumé of the life and acts of the saint commemorated.[1] The current Martyrologium Romanum represents this type perfectly. The earliest historic martyrology of which we have any certain knowledge is that of St. Bede, written around 735, and possibly based on some earlier version of the historic type. There followed new versions and expansions of Bede's work by Florus (c. 830), Wandelbert de Prum (c. 848), Rhabanus Maurus (c. 850), Adon de Vienne (850–860), Usuard (c. 875), and others.[2] The work of Usuard, which is based directly on that of Adon, met with general favor in the Middle Ages, and seems to have been more used than that of any other writer.

It will be observed that 735 to 875 was the period in which the historic martyrology received its greatest impulse, in which the legends which had been growing around the saints were collected and set down in a liturgical calendar. Episcopal statutes of the period require priests to have such martyrologies

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[1] Dom Henri Quentin, *Les Martyrologes Historiques du Moyen Age*, Paris, 1908.

[2] The dates are those given by Quentin, *loc. cit.*

in order properly to celebrate the feasts of the church.[3] The Council of Aix-la-Chapelle, in 817, ordered the reading of the martyrology in monasteries, a custom already in existence since the sixth century[4] in certain monastic houses.

The bare notations found in the early Church calendars were enlarged to the proportions of biographies. This was by no means a work of imagination. The sources of the information on the saints given in the new martyrologies of the eighth and ninth centuries have been accurately determined. Adon de Vienne, for instance, goes for his information to the following sources: the traditional church calendar, the passions and lives of individual saints and martyrs, the Old Testament, the New Testament, the letters of St. Cyprian, the church history of Eusebius, translated by Rufinus of Aquileia, the works of St. Jerome, Gennadius, St. Augustine, Possidius, St. Paulin de Nole, Gregory the Great, Gregory of Tours, and St. Bede. Hasty identifications, misreadings, etc., made for the usual quota of mistakes, but in general, there was a constant reference to the sources.[5] That those sources were for the most part historically unreliable, from our point of view, can hardly be contested. However, they did exist and were used in good faith.

What were these sources, these legends, and how had they been composed? The question is difficult to answer. From various witnesses, it would appear that in the fourth and fifth centuries, not much was known about the early martyrs, except their names, with the date and place of their deaths. St. Augustine remarks in speaking of St. Stephen: "While we have difficulty in finding the stories of other martyrs to recite on their feast days, his passion is in a canonical book."[6] Prudentius says with reference to the tombs of the martyrs at Rome—"These silent tombs, mute marble—you will have difficulty

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[3] *Ibid.*, p. 689.

[4] A. Dufourcq, *Etude sur les Gesta Martyrum Romains*, Paris, 1900, p. 386.

[5] Dom Quentin also convicts Adon of considerable falsification, which seems to have had no other object than to increase the credit of his martyrology, and to give it an air of antiquity.

[6] Sermo, 315, n. I, Migne, P. L. xxxviii, p. 1426, cited by H. Delehaye, *The Legends of the Saints*, London, 1907, p. 73.

finding even their names."[7] Nevertheless, the growing pilgrimages created a demand for details of the lives of these saints, especially as the new heroes of the fourth century, the Egyptian ascetics, threatened to overshadow their popularity. The hermits and confessors of the desert, being contemporaries, were provided with complete and authentic biographies, and made a tremendous appeal to the imagination of the times.[8] The touching loyalty which saints have always inspired must have led the partisans of the almost forgotten saints of the first centuries to provide those details which would appeal to the pilgrims, and restore the glory of the early martyrs. So in the fourth century, Pope Damasus restores the catacombs, ornaments them and adds inscriptions. Dufourcq remarks that his inscriptions, by their caution, show that he was not inclined to promote the spread of unauthorized legends.[9] But the legends grew, nevertheless, in spite of the fact that it was forbidden to read them in church. At the beginning of the sixth century, the decree, *de recipiendis et non recipiendis libris*, tells us: "According to ancient custom, the Holy Roman Church is particularly careful not to read (aloud) the *gesta martyrum*, inasmuch as the names of those who wrote them are not known, and it is thought that superfluous or unsuitable things have been added to them by infidels and by the simple-minded."[10] The excessive cult of the martyrs, expressed in the legends growing up around them, was thus regarded with suspicion by the church, still trained in the ancient culture and skeptical of the popular imagination. The century of the great invasions, when Rome was completely abandoned for months, brought a notable change. At the end of the sixth century Gregory the Great is as credulous as Damasus was critical, at its beginning.

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[7] Peristephanon, XI, St. Hippolytus, *Migne*, P. L. ix, p. 530, cited by A. Dufourcq, *Etude sur les Gesta Martyrum Romains*, Paris, 1900, p. 17.

[8] Sulpicius Severus, in his Dialogue, opposes the merits of St. Martin of Tours to the merits of the hermits of the Thebaid. He had already celebrated the virtues of this holy man of Gaul in his biography of St. Martin, which created a sensation in Rome, Carthage and Alexandria. See T. R. Glover, *Life and Letters in the Fourth Century*, Cambridge, Eng., 1901.

[9] A. Dufourcq, *loc. cit.*, p. 272, N. 3.

[10] Text as given by Duchesne, in his edition of the *Liber Pontificalis*, Paris, 1886, p. CI, cf. Martene, *De Antiquis Ecclesiae Ritibus*, Venice, 1783, Vol. I, p. 135, Art. IV, II, and Dufourcq, *loc. cit.*, p. 289.

Father H. Delehaye, the present head of the Bollandists, in his book, "Les Passions des Martyrs et les Genres Littéraires,"[11] traces the literary influences which presided at the formation of the legends of the saints. He marks three periods, the historic, the panegyric, and the epic. The first includes the small group of passions which are founded on the actual proconsular records, or on the accounts of contemporaries. The second marks the influence of classic rhetoric, expanding, according to the rules of composition, the meager data furnished by tradition. The third, the epic, is a period in which the imagination has free play. The second or panegyric period began after the conversion of Constantine, in the early fourth century, the third or epic period before the end of the fourth century, and while the panegyric was still flourishing.

The fabulous element in the lives of the saints coincides with the beginning of the epic period. When the author of a panegyric described the early life of a saint about whom he knew nothing except that he was a shepherd, his development of the idea was such as might have been made by any rhetorician —he dealt in probabilities. But the inventions of the epic authors, totally different in spirit, dealt in the improbable, the marvellous element predominating, as might be expected, in compositions which were built up out of vague traditions, transformed by the pious and credulous imaginations of the pilgrims who flocked to the catacombs. The influence of the lives of the Egyptian ascetics has already been remarked upon. Delehaye thinks it very probable, though not certain, that the epic element originated in Egypt; the other centers of hagiographic production, Rome, Syria, and Asia Minor, generally producing much more sober work. We must also note that from a very early date (2nd century), there had existed models of the fabulous in the Apocryphal Gospels of the childhood of the Saviour, the Gospel of Nicodemus, etc.

From the fourth century on, the development in the lives of the saints was always towards making them more marvellous. A larger and larger part was given over to the miraculous, in

[11] Brussels, 1921, passim.

expanding the information supplied either by oral tradition, written documents or by paintings and statues. The saint becomes merely a lay-figure, moved about as the author pleases, in order to construct an edifying story. As always in popular drama, villainy is made so black, and virtue so white, that all subtlety is lost, and, with it, all interest. It is this that explains the desperate dullness of the lives in their last stage, as against the thrilling interest of the few very early lives which remain to us. Those early examples were too simple to please the general taste. How startling they could be in the simplicity may be seen in the passion of St. Fructuosus, where the following dialogue occurs: "The judge asked: 'Art thou a bishop?' Fructuosus, the bishop, said: 'I am.' Aemilianus replied: 'Thou hast been.' And he sentenced them to be burned alive." Compare this with the verbose inventions of later days, when judge and accused enter into protracted debates on religion and philosophy, often before huge crowds. And instead of the simple sentence of death, speedily executed, what torments are not invented! In the passion of SS. Clement of Ancyra and Agathangelus, the trial and tortures last no less than twenty-eight years, during which occur the most extraordinary miracles; two emperors and nine prefects are concerned in their persecution, the scene of which shifts seven times to as many different cities. Such inventions had their root in popular traditions and in the minds of the uncritical scribes of the early Middle Ages, honestly attempting to edify their audience.

At the end of the sixth century, Gregory the Great, in Italy, Gregory of Tours, in Gaul, mark the beginning of the medieval spirit of hagiography. It has been remarked that Gregory of Tours, at the beginning of the Middle Ages, compiled his "In Gloria Martyrum" in the same spirit as Jacques de Voragine his "Legenda Aurea" in the thirteenth century. "In both cases they had copious materials at their disposal, and deliberately neglected the sources that would have interested us the most in order to devote all their attention to the more marvellous features which betray in a marked degree their legendary character."[12]

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[12] H. Delehaye, *The Legends of the Saints*, London, 1907, p. 77.

By the ninth century, when the historic martyrologies were composed, the material at the command of a medieval hagiographer was enormous; it has been shown that the compilers of the martyrologies resorted to the sources, and what those sources were. By the twelfth century, when Old French hagiography may be said to begin,[13] the Latin lives had become venerable by their very age, convincing by their very numbers.

Meanwhile a second Oriental influence, the result of the renewed commerce with the East from the ninth century on, and especially active during and after the crusades, brought new marvellous elements to the lives of saints as it did to other branches of literature. The thirteenth century showed itself more credulous, more fond of the miraculous, than perhaps any other, with such compilations as the "Legenda Aurea" of Jacques de Voragine in Italy, the collections of miracles made by Caesar of Heisterbach in Germany, Gautier de Coincy and Jacques de Vitry in France. At the same time, the lives of contemporary saints could be faithful accounts, *e. g.*, the lives of St. Dominic. It is only when they are dealing with the past or with remote things that their credulity is unlimited. They differ from us rather by their tendency to believe on any testimony whatever, while we tend to doubt on any testimony short of absolute proof. This, of course, is only another way of saying that they lacked the critical spirit. Apart from an élite, the same thing is true today of the majority of the people.

It may be remarked at once that the Church has never made any official statement as to the truth or untruth of any particular legend. Apart from the canonical books, the communicant was free to believe or not to believe. It was this freedom to doubt that called forth the protestations of absolute veracity that are the most obvious features of the prologues to the lives of the saints. It was this also that gave free play to the imagination of the hagiographer.[14] His primary purpose was to edify the faithful, and to offer them models of conduct and piety.

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[13] In the sense that we have only one specimen for the tenth and one for the eleventh century.

[14] Petit de Julleville, *La Langue et la Littérature Française*, Vol. I, p. 17, Les Vies des Saints.

He was composing, not history as we understand it, but as he understood it. We are disposed to reject, *per se*, the unusual, and so was he. We only differ on what is meant by unusual. For us, the omnipresent miracle is open to suspicion. The medieval hagiographer had his own criteria. One, for instance, writing a life of St. Leger, rejected a whole episode in the Latin life, and explains that he does so on the advice and with the consent of his abbot, because he thinks it highly improbable that the saint can ever have had friendly relations with the ungodly.[15]

The same claim to absolute veracity that we find in the lives of the saints is found in the prologues to the epic in Old French, and some critics would have us believe that the phrases are mere conventions in both cases. This may be true in the epic. Summoned to produce his pretended documents, or to name them, the author of the *chanson de geste* would have been much embarrassed. Not so with our authors. Every one of them, if he had mentioned a Latin source, could have produced it for you, or an extract of it, or a fairly faithful recitation from memory. "Si j'ai bien eu en memoire ço ke j'ai oï en l'estoire."[16] The problem of sources is quite different for the lives of the saints than it is for the epic.

Although he did not use his sources as we should expect a historian to do, the medieval hagiographer no doubt considered himself a historian, for history then, as long afterwards, was generally considered a branch of literature, and not a science.[17] For him, a Latin text was sufficient guarantee, and any development of it legitimate which kept intact the central idea, edification. As for the excessive use of the marvellous element, it was already there in the Latin version, and corresponded to a fundamental longing in the medieval mind, answered not only the lives of the saints but in the *chanson de geste*, the courtly romance, and in every other phase of medieval literature and life. The medieval hagiographer addressed an audience hungry

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[15] G. Paris, *La Vie de St. Gilles*, SATF, 1881, p. xxxix.
[16] Marie de France, *Purgatoire de St. Patrice.*
[17] A. Molinier, *Les Sources de l'Histoire de France, Historiographie du M. A.*, in Vol. VI.

for details, insatiable in its demand for circumstantial accounts of the marvellous. He shared their belief, and endeavored to satisfy it. The lives of the saints were in tone with medieval culture in general, so that we need not be astonished to find our authors asserting, and believing, things which to us appear altogether fabulous. We find the same tendency in the popular history of today. The people are still ready to accept the legendary tales that grow up around a popular hero, *e. g.*, Washington, and any attempt to reduce him to merely human proportions is foredoomed.

The first really critical approach to the lives of the saints did not come until the seventeenth century, when the Jesuits began the publication of the *Acta Sanctorum*, a monumental work which they are still carrying on.

The basis for this study is the article published by M. Paul Meyer in the thirty-third volume of the "Histoire Littéraire de la France". Let us take his own explanation of the choice of lives there made. "Sous le titre de Légendes Hagiographiques, nous comprenons tous les récits ayant pour objet l'histoire du Christ, de la Vierge Marie et des saints . . ."[18] Further on, establishing the list of Old French poems of this character that have come down to us, he makes the following preliminary remark: "Nous ne croyons pas devoir faire entrer dans l'énumeration qui suit les courtes légendes en vers qui, sans avoir le caractère proprement liturgique, étaient chantées dans les églises á certaines fêtes, telles que les Epitres Farcies de saint Etienne, de saint Jean l'Evangéliste, des saints Innocents, de saint Thomas de Cantorberry, etc."[19]

M. Meyer then gives a list of about two hundred and thirty poems in Old French, ranging from the tenth century, with the Vie de St. Leger, to the fifteenth. They concern the lives of one hundred and one saints, the eight common divisions observed in biographies of the Virgin (Genealogy, Conception, etc.), and fourteen divisions in the life of the Saviour (Nativity, etc.). Most of the saints are represented by only one version, others,

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[18] P. 328.
[19] *Ibid.*, p. 336, No. 1.

(*e. g.* Marguerite), by no less than eleven. It is the prologues and epilogues to this material that I have examined, as far as possible.

We may note that the great mass of hagiographic literature in the vernacular which has come down to us, is in prose. So many of the prose lives are unpublished that it would be difficult to include them in a study of this scope. They are, besides, a later development, and, for that reason, less interesting to us. Prose, as a medium for the Old French hagiographer, did not come into any great use until the first quarter of the thirteenth century, so that it would appear that, as long as the lives of the saints were disseminated orally, they were put into verse, and that prose was meant rather for the private reader. As the interest of the prologues lies largely in the light they throw on the manner in which these lives were presented to the people, how they were recited, where, and by whom, and the popular attitude towards the marvels they relate, the prose lives have not been included in this study.

Similar studies have been made of the prologues to the mystery plays,[20] and to the epic.[21]

The material used is divided as follows among the centuries from the ninth to the fourteenth:

Ninth—one (Ste. Eulalie)
Tenth—one, (Vie de St. Leger)
Eleventh—one, (Vie de St. Alexis)
Twelfth—twenty-six
Thirteenth—one hundred and nineteen
Fourteenth—forty

It will be seen, therefore, that the thirteenth will predominate in considering the lives as a whole, and that we possess too little evidence on the tenth and eleventh centuries to draw any valid conclusions concerning them. If we may deduce the popularity of the genre from the examples which remain to us from each

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[20] D. H. Carnahan, Yale thesis, 1915. Includes both Old French and Old Provencal.

[21] R. Halpersohn, *Ueber die Einleitungen d. altfr. Kunstepos*, Heidelberg, 1911.

century, it would seem that in the twelfth century it was well established, in the thirteenth at its height, and in the fourteenth on the decline. The decline of popular verse would then correspond, as we might expect, with the rise of prose, as the reading public increased.

I have chosen to stop at 1400, not because the date in itself has any particular significance, but because it seems to leave a safe margin after the popularization of the versions as given in the "Legenda Aurea".

I

Evidence Tending to Show That the Poems Were Designed to be Read Aloud

The prologues to the lives show, for the most part, that the poems were intended to be read aloud. Here are some examples:

> Seignor, oiez que io dirai . . .
>
> VIE DE ST. BRENDAN

> D'un dulz escrit orrez la sume . . .
>
> FRAGMENT D'UNE VIE DE SAINT GILLES

> Ore entendez, que Dex vos oie
> Et doint a tos honor et joie.
>
> VIE DE ST. JULIEN

> Or feites peiz, si m'entendez . . .
>
> ST. SILVESTRE

> Entendes i, segneur, gardes ne l'oblier . . .
>
> STE. AGNÈS

> Qui vieut oir vers moi se traie . . .
>
> MARIE-ASSOMPTION

> Beneois soit qui m'escoutera
> Et qui un poi de pais fera.
>
> PILATE

This formula,—"Listen, and may God bless you for it, be quiet now, come nearer and pay attention"—is so general in the prologues that it is hardly necessary to give any further quotations. As a matter of fact, it is found in about two-thirds of them. This proportion being constant for the lives in each century considered, it cannot be said that our prologues demonstrate any progressive lessening of the popularity of the oral method

of disseminating the lives of saints in verse.[1] Apparently, the lives in verse were definitely designed for oral transmission.

The example given from the poem on the Assumption of the Virgin Mary indicates an effort to collect a crowd which suggests a jongleur reciting the poem in a public place. We know that the jongleurs,[2] and *clerici vagantes*[3] did recite the lives of the saints in this manner. They were also recited in church.[4] The Epitres Farcies are closely akin to our lives, and contain very similar injunctions to pay attention. While the Epistle of the day was being read in Latin by the sub-deacon, interpolated explanations in Old French were recited by the deacon. In the Epitre Farcie of St. Stephen were read: "Entendez tost a cest sermon . . ."; in that of St. Thibaut de Provins: "Or entendez, tres douce gent. . . ."[5] The custom of reciting the lives of saints in Latin is a very old one, and still forms part of the nocturnal offices of the Catholic Church. The French interpolations which we know as the Epitres Farcies, date from the twelfth century.

When a form of address is used, the most commonly found is "seigneur". "Bone gent", "douce gent", are also common. Little or nothing can be deduced from these terms, which are much the same in the prologues to the epic and to the mysteries. The title "seigneur", of course, was used as freely and with as little meaning as "monsieur".[6] We find once "seignurs freres" where the meaning was clearly "brother monks".[7] In general, the terms of address used indicate, by their very vagueness,

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[1] Petit de Julleville, *Langue et Litt. Fr.*, 18. Lives in verse were recited in the churches of Paris as late as 1632, but this can only have been a formal survival.

[2] E. Faral, *Les Jongleurs en France au Moyen Age*, Paris, 1910.

[3] *E. g.* Guernes, or Guarnier, de Pont St. Maxence.

[4] Martene, (*De Antiquis Ecclesiae Rittbus*, Venice, 1783, Vol. I, p. 135, Art. IV, II), remarks that the custom was general in the early church, except in Rome. At the end of the eighth century, apparently, it was true also of Rome, since Pope Hadrian, in 794, assured Charlemagne that it was proper to read the lives of the saints in church on their feast-days. (*Migne*, P. L. lxxxix, 151, cited by Dufourcq, *Etude sur les Gesta Martyrum Romains*, Paris, 1900, p. 386).

[5] *Hist. Litt. de la France*, XIII, 108. The examples are of the XII c.

[6] J. Bedier, *Les Fabliaux*, Paris, p. 377.

[7] Vision de St. Paul, cited by E. Faral, *Les Jongleurs en France au Moyen Age*, Paris, 1910, p. 50.

that the lives had a very wide appeal, and were not designed for any restricted audience.

The request for silence was so clearly a necessity when addressing a group of restless people that I see no reason for dwelling on the point. It was perhaps not necessary when the life was intended to be read in the refectory of a monastery, although in the case cited above, the author continues: "Seignurs freres, or escutez. . . ."

The lives were recited by the clergy and by the jongleurs, in public and private, and formed part of that pious literature which was read aloud, or sung, at mealtimes in the monasteries as a substitute for conversation. At least one Old French legendary is definitely marked as intended for this latter purpose.[8] Certain others have rather the character of pious marching songs, and may have been sung on pilgrimages; the life of St. Thomas of Canterbury by Benoit might fall in this classification.

If we assume "lire" as used in the prologues and epilogues to mean "read silently", some of the lives may have been intended to serve a double purpose, as private reading and as recitation. This is the opinion of M. Faral.[9] He says: ". . . d'après un ms. décrit par M. P. Meyer (Not. et Ex. XXXIV, I, 198 ss.), on lit:

> Cil qui lisent cest livre que de tei fait avons
> E cil qui cest escrit e toz cil qui l'escriveront
> E cil qui lire nel savent e lire le feront
> Toz soient herbergez la sus en ta maison.

L'oeuvre était donc destinée à être lue dans le particulier et pourtant on y rélève des expressions telles que: "Seignurs, or escotez"; ou "Seignurs qui Dieu amez entendez bonement"; ou "Seignurs por amur Deu, pri vus qui m'escoltez," etc. Il y a évidemment ici imitation des procédés épiques."

From the examples given by M. Faral himself, it seems ob-

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[8] P. Meyer, *Hist. Litt. de la France*, XXXIII, 334. The custom of reading the lives of saints in monasteries as a pious exercise goes back to the sixth century and the beginnings of monasticism in the West. (Du ourcq, *loc. cit.*, p. 386).

[9] *Loc. cit.*, p. 49, No. 2.

vious that the weight of evidence is all on the side of an oral rendition. Besides, we may note that the author speaks of his work as a "chançon." "Lire" in our poems means either "read" or "read aloud," but more often, "read aloud," "sing in recitative." This inscription on an English legendary establishes the meaning "read aloud":

"Ce livre diviseie a la priorie de Kempseie de lire a mengier."[10] If "lire" be taken to mean "read aloud," the expressions which M. Faral disposes of as imitations of the epic technique become perfectly natural. There seems no reason to suppose that the lives of the saints were imitations of the epic; they may have been, sporadically; the converse might also be true, sporadically. At any rate, imitation need not be assumed on the basis of a mere injunction to silence. The medieval author was faced with the same problem whether he was declaiming an epic or reciting a pious biography—how to make his audience keep quiet, and pay attention? The most obvious way was to ask them for silence.

To sum up, the prologues which I have examined, show by the request for silence, that, as we might have expected, the lives of the saints were disseminated in the same way as the rest of medieval popular literature—orally.

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[10] *Hist. Litt. de la France*, XXXIII, 334.

II

Purpose of the Work

The purpose which moved the medieval hagiographer to the composition of these lives is always the same—his desire to edify the faithful, to hold up before them the glorious example of the saints and to incite them to emulate their piety and virtues. This is the reason which is with very few exceptions brought forward immediately nor is there any reason to doubt that such was the case, apart from a few instances where professional writers supplied the demand for works of this sort.

Sometimes we find a definite dedication in which it appears that the life was ordered:

> Donna Aaliz la renei
> Par qui valdrat lei divine
> Par qui creistrat lei de terre
> E remandrat tante guerre
> Por les armes henri lu rei
>
> ST. BRENDAN

There follows a dedication in form to Aelis, wife of Henry I, of England.[1] It was written to order:

> En lettres mis et en romanz
> Ensi cum fud li teons cumanz . . .

Another life was written on royal command:

> Ma dame de Valois[2] me prie
> Que en romanz mete la vie
> Dune sainte quele mult aime
>
> STE. GENEVIÈVE

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[1] 1068-1135. He married Aeliz in 1121.

[2] Paul Meyer, (*Hist. Litt. de la France*, XXXIII, 351, note 1), thinks that if "Valois" is the proper reading, the reference must be to one of the three wives of Charles de Valois, 1270–1325. But his first marriage did not take place until 1290, and the poem seems of earlier date. All the verse MSS. have "Valois" but the prose version has "La dame de Flandre."

Other royal dedications are found in the life of St. Edward the Confessor (I) dedicated to Eleanor,[3] wife of Henry III of England; and the life of St. Elizabeth dedicated by Rutebeuf to Isabeau,[4] wife of Thibaut de Champagne, Hue de Cambrai declares that he writes "en l'onor al bon roi de France . . . que on apiele Phelippon."[5]

Sometimes the lives are undertaken at the request of an ecclesiastic, possibly the superior of the religious who is writing. Thus:

A ses tres chiers seignours et peres
Le prier Eustace et les freres
De la Fontaine Notre Dame
Un chetif recommande s'ame
. . . . . .
Et pur ce quil vous en souviegne
Ceste petit livre vous presente

ST. PAULIN

Similarly, the author of the life of Tobie states that he writes at the request of the prior of Kenilworth.[6]

But the prologues, for the most part, present only one motive; the work is composed as a devotional act, to the glory and honor of God, as the following list will show:

Oez por Dieu et por son nom

ANTECHRIST

Qui a talent de Dieu servir
Si viegne avant pour moy oyr

STE. BARBE

Pour l'amitie de Jhesu Crist . . .
Voill je la vie retraire

STE. CATHERINE D'ALEXANDRIE

---

[3] Eleanor, born 1222, married Henry III in 1236, and died in 1291. P. Meyer dates the poem as belonging to the middle of the 13th century.

[4] Isabelle, oldest daughter of St. Louis, was born in 1241, married Thibaut V, of Champagne in 1255, and died in 1271. The poem is thus dated between 1255–1271.

[5] Vie de St. Quentin I, Philippe Auguste?

[6] *Arch. f. d. Studium der neueren Spr. LXII*, 380.

Al loenge le Creatur
Commenc cest ovre et sa valur

ST. EDWARD THE CONFESSOR

Pur les seinz martyrs honurer
Voil lur passiuns recunter

ST. EUSTACHE

Ge ne truis pas por avoir pris
Ne por robes ne por avoir
Mais por l'amor la dame avoir
Qui bien revest les ames nues
Et ses amanz emporte es nues

STE. LEOCADIE

Obviously to the Blessed Virgin. The denial that the author expects any material reward is fairly common. In the first example, the author speaks of himself.

Quen tel grace le recuillez
Quen vos oraisons laccuillez
Avec les aultres trepassez
Il ne veult plus mes cest assez
E nul ne lui doit contredire
Ja crestien nen sera pire . . .

ST. PAULIN

A la Deu loenge e a la sue gloire
Faire volums d'une virgine memoire

STE. MARGUERITÉ

En l'onneur Dieu et en memoire
De la haute dame de gloire
Me vovrai or ci amoier[7]
Et trover et arimoier
Sa saintisme nativite

MARIE-NATIVITE

En honurance Jhesu Crist
Ki tut le mund forma e fist
Un' aventure voil cunter

PURGATOIRE DE ST. PATRICE

These form a fairly typical selection of the poems written as devotional acts. Compositions in honor of the Virgin are common, as:

> Tun livre, Dame, ici definerun
> A cels qui l'unt oi donez ta beneicun
>
> MARIE-ASSUMPTION

Others, as we have seen, were to the honor and glory of God and the saints. A common opening is:

> En l'onur de la Trinite
>
> JESUS-EVANGILE DE NICODEME

The author sometimes places his poem under the protection of the saint whose deeds it recalls. The example I shall give, shows that this life was meant to be recited, in accordance with the ancient custom, on the day on which the saint was commemorated in the martyrology.

> Au nom de la Vierge Marie
> Et de la Saincte Trinite
> De Sainct Jehan vous diray la vie
> Dont nous *faisons* solempnite . . .
>
> ST. JEAN BAPTISTE

The prayer at the end of the prologues is always addressed directly to the saint and implores his good offices in return for the work that the author has done in making more popular his cult. One author seems to state this as a definite arrangement:

> Margarete ore pensez
> De moy cheytif ke ay translatez
> Vostre vie e vostre passion
> Ke dieu me grante sauvacion
> E a touz cels ke cest escrit
> Orrunt ou lirrunt o delit
> *Ceo est le covenant avant fet
> Ore seit garde si vus plet.
> amen.
>
> STE. MARGUERITE

All these which mention religious motives have at bottom, the fundamental idea of all hagiography, the idea that to write or to read the life of a saint is to perform a definite devotional act, is to fulfill the primary purpose for which man was put on earth, that is, to serve and to praise God. The earliest saint's life which we possess in French, apart from the Cantilene de Ste. Eulalie, which has no prologue, is the Vie de St. Léger. The well-known lines with which it opens:

> Domine Deus devemps lauder
> et a sos sancz honor porter;
> in su 'amor cantomps dels sanz
> que por lui augrent grantz aanz
> et or es temps et si est biens
> que nos cantumps de sant Lethgier.
>
> ST. LEGER

express this idea perfectly. But as the people know no Latin, those who do know Latin have a duty to perform. In order that the "laie gent" may take example from the saints, and honor them correctly, it is essential that the lives be put in a form easily understood by everybody. This is a purpose often alleged:

> Al mien avis mult mieuz serreit
> E a plus grant pru turnereit
> Si li livre de antiquite
> Ki sunt fait de verite
> . . . En tel langage tresturne fussent
> Que plusurs gent pru en eussent
>
> ST. CLEMENT, POPE

The ability to translate Latin is a talent conferred by God, and we know from the parable of the buried talents, that we are expected to put such accomplishments to good use.

> Dit me est et roue que io face
> De Seint Nicholas en romance
> . . . . . .
> Chescon deit mustrer sa bonte

De ceo que deus lui ad done
. . . . . .
A ces qui n'unt lectres aprises
Ne lur ententes n'i ont mises
Deivent li clerc mustrer la lei
. . . . . .
En romanz voil dire un petit
De ceo que nus le latin dit
Que li lai puissent aprendre
Qui ne poent latin entendre

ST. NICHOLAS-WACE

In this prologue, Wace makes the best development of what had long been a commonplace theme in the Latin and was to become hackneyed in the French.

Some of the authors profess a desire to repair, by writing devotional works, the errors of a wasted youth, when they were wont to compose less edifying literature. This sort of repentance and reparation was common enough. Well-known examples are Pope Clement IV,[7] who had been a troubadour, but who made reparation for this youthful indiscretion by devoting his talents to the composition of poems in honor of the Virgin, by the recital of which an indulgence could be gained. Foulquet de Marseille, after becoming a bishop, wept publicly, says his Provençal biographer, on hearing recited some of the secular works of his youth. The following are typical examples:

Mult ai use cum pechere
. . . . . .
Si fesei les serventeis,
Chanceunettes, rymes, saluz
Entre les drues et les druz
Mult me penay de teles vers fere
. . . . . .

It was the devil who made me do this, but now that I am growing old:

---

[7] *Rom. XII*, 152.

Mes jurs jolifs de ma joefnesce
Sen vunt; si trey jeo a veilesce
Si est bien dreit ke me repente
En autre oure metterai mentente

ST. EDMOND, ROI D'ESTANGLIE (DENIS PIRAMUS)

Another example:

Mais si pooie tant ouvrer
Que je peusse recouvrer
Le tens que j'ai mis en escrire
Et en trover trufes et dire
. . . . . .
J'aroie fait plus grant gaaigne
Que s'estoie quens de Champagne

MARIE-NATIVITÉ

I shall quote the other examples of this sentiment which we find, for they illustrate one of the most interesting ideas which we find in the prologues; they have the ring of sincerity and their authors, in mending their ways, have lost none of the skill of expression, which, they explain, the devil lent them to further his ends.

Ju ai sovent traitiet d'amur,
De joie grant et de dolzor,
De vaniteit et de folie
De gas, de ris, de legerie
Ju ai foluet en ma jovent;
En altre liu or ai m'entent

Cant jovenes fui teil chose fis
Et mon penseir en teil liu mis
Dont moi reprent et vul retraire
Car teil chose est a Deu contraire
Cant a ses jors est l'om venuz
Garde soi bien ne soit perduz

ST. ANDRÉ

Seignors, mestre Andre de Castances
Qu'a mout ame sonez et dances

Vos mande quil n'en a mes cure
Quer son aage qui maure
Le sermont d'aucun bien tretier
Qui doie plere et profitier
Et qui li soit aucun ator
D'acorder soi au criator . . .

JESUS-EVANGILE DE NICODEME

A natural accompaniment of the last idea is the expression of contempt for profane literature:

Ne voil pas en fables d'Ovide
Seinnurs, mettre mun estuide
Ne ja, sachez, ne parlerum
Ne de Tristram ne de Galerun
Ne de Renart ne de Hersente
Ne voil pas mettre m'entente

LES SEPT DORMANTS

Our authors deplore the vogue of worldly tales and the undeserved honor in which the jongleurs are held.

Plus est escoute li jugliere
Que ne soit saint Pol ou saint Piere
E plus est hui cest jor li fol
Oiz que saint Pierre ou saint Pol . . .

ST. GREGOIRE LE GRAND

Other examples of this feeling are not lacking. Paul Meyer remarks of the life of St. Gregoire le Grand[8], that it illustrates the efforts put forth by the ecclesiastical authorities to check the popularity of the *chanson de geste.* I shall give the other examples and discuss this idea more fully later.[9]

In two cases, the authors have undertaken to revise older lives, because the original authors, rude and uncultivated, had produced inferior compositions; the first example had been translated before but:

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[8] *Ibid.*
[9] Chap. 5.

En est la rime vil tenue
. . . . . .
Ne l'ament pas pur mun orgueil
Car point prisee estre n'en vueil
Il suls en det loenge aveir
De cui sai mon povre saveir
STE. CATHERINE D'ALEXANDRIE

The author is a nun:

De Berekinge sui nunain

Here is another case, again a life of St. Catherine of Alexandria, who seems to have been unfortunate in her translators, although, to judge by the number of her biographies which have come down to us, she was one of the most popular saints of the Middle Ages. This time it is again the rhyme which is defective and the new author attributes it to the dialect of the original poet.

Un clerc translate avoit
Mes, por ce que normant estoit
La rime qui fu faite encois
Si ne pleisoit mie aus Francois
Por ce l'a mes amis tramise
Qu'elle sera en francois mise.
STE. CATHERINE D'ALEXANDRIE

This reason for revising an old life of a saint is frequently found in Latin, notes H. Delehaye,[10] who describes it as "the classic complaint of all those who would persuade an author to rewrite a biography or a martyrdom."

To sum up this section, the dominant intention of the authors, as expressed in their prologues, is to edify the faithful by setting before them examples of piety and devotion which they may imitate. This, as every hagiographer has pointed out, is the fundamental reason for which the Church encouraged the writing of the biographies of the saints. The idea is common in

[10] *The Legends of the Saints*, London, 1907, p. 68.

all hagiography. By translating the lives from Latin, the authors are thus performing a good deed, one which will be suitably rewarded. Indeed, if they possess the ability to write, and neglect this opportunity to do good, they are sinning by wasting their talents. Far more guilty are they if they misuse their talents by producing profane poetry. Formal dedications are, comparatively, very rare, which seems to point to a sort of group production in the monasteries, either by the monks or by the writers who found employment there.[11] Another indication of the clerical origin of the poems is the aversion expressed for all kinds of profane literature, suggesting a definite campaign against the latter. Several lives are revised because of stylistic pre-occupations rather than with the idea of bringing new material or sifting the old.

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[11] Gasquet, *English Monastic Life*, London, p. 63.

III

Introductory Remarks

After the injunction to silence, the invocation of God or the saints, and the expression of the author's purpose in writing the life of the saint, we usually find, where the author does not plunge immediately *in medias res*, some moral reflections, usually on a well-known theme, perhaps a parable from the New Testament. We have already seen in the preceding chapter how the parable of the buried talents was linked with the general idea of edifying the faithful. The incident in the New Testament[1] in which the rich young man is discouraged because he is advised to sell all he has and give it to the poor, was also used:

> . . . L'Escriture tesmoinne car qui vet aut monter
> Il ne doit pas grant fais desuz son col porter
> Et c'est escrit que richez qui ne vet dire tien
> N'antrerai (?) en la gloire dou Dex maint et li suen.
>
> ST. GUILLAUME, ROI D'ANGLETERRE

Obviously a well-chosen text to introduce the life of a royal saint. Others employ the standard device of moralists, which corresponds, of course, to a universal human belief,—"that, in the good old days, things were much better than they are now." The world is going downhill, they declare gloomily. This idea forms the basis of the only prologue which we have to the earliest version of St. Alexis. I reproduce it here:

> Bons fu li siecles al tems ancienour
> quer feiz i eret e justise ed amours,
> s'i ert credance, dont or n'i at nul prout
> . . . . . .
> . . . toz s'en vait declinant
>
> ST. ALEXIS

---

[1] Luke 18: 23.

The same idea is found in the thirteenth century version of the same poem:

> Li siecle veit mult en declin
> . . . . . .
> Si ui est mal, demein iert pis . . .
>
> ST. ALEXIS

There are examples of a related idea, that this is a wicked world. The author of the life of St. Christophe says tersely:

> Poy a de bien en cest siecle mortal
>
> ST. CHRISTOPHE

The author of the collection known as Tombel de Chartreuse[2] which includes a fourteenth century life of Alexis, scatters his moral reflections through the collection. He too expresses a disappointment in the ways of the world:

> Quil est pou de gens ou monde
> Qui Dieu ne saincte eglise honourent
> Plus tost a la taverne courent
> Boire les blans vins et les rouges

To a life of Ste. Marie l'Egyptienne, Rutebeuf places as preface these appropriate remarks:

> Ne puet venir trop tart a oevre
> Bons ouvriers qui sanz lasser oevre
> . . . . . .
> D'une ouvriere vous vueil retrere
> Qui en la fin de son afere
>
> STE. MARIE L'EGYPTIENNE

Obviously an excellent text to illustrate a belated repentance. Other familiar clichés used are:

It takes all kinds to make a world;

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[2] Desroches, *Extraits de plusieurs petits poèmes*, etc. Caen, 1839, p. 42.

De diverses meurs se diversent
Les genz qui au siecle conversent.

ST. EUSTACHE

All is not gold that glitters;

Ce n'est pas or quanques reluit
Li arbre que ne porte fruit
Doit estre esbrainchiez et copez
Et ou feu doit estre getez

STE. THAÏS

We must work if we wish to eat;

Cil Sires dist que l'en aeure
"Ne soit mengier qui ne labeure."

STE. ELIZABETH DE HONGRIE

As this last was a dedicatory preface, the object was not so much to introduce the life of the saint as to hint to the poet's patron that this could not be altogether a labor of love. Jubinal, who edits the life, remarks[3] "Il parait que Rutebeuf tenait a bien inculquer cette idée à ses protecteurs, car elle se représente plusieurs fois dans ses poésies." V. "La Bataille des vices contre les vertus" et "Le Mariage Rustebeuf."

The Old Testament is also used. Solomon is pressed into service:

Sallemons dist et conte une raison pour voir

ST. JEAN L'EVANGELISTE

Que au commenchement de sens et de savoir
(The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom)

Another parable used is that of the sower:

Cil qui seme bone semence
Ou bone parole comence

---

[3] *Oeuvres de Rutebeuf*, nouv. éd., II, 311, No. 1.

(Must take care not to throw the
seed on stones or in the thorns
but on good ground)
A Deu pri jeo, qu'il me defende
De semer en tere baraine

ST. TOBIE

Some authors arouse the curiosity of their readers by announcing that they are offering a novelty.

Novele chose en nostre verger
A nus se mustra avant her

STE. ELISABETH DE HONGRIE

This life was written perhaps seventy-five years after the death of the saint.

Beu seignours, ki (vus) delitez
Noveles oyer de estrangetez

STE. MARTHA

These two lives, both written in England, are supposed by Paul Meyer[4] to have been composed by Bozon. The same author furnishes us with our two examples of etymologies used as introductory matter, after the manner of the bestiaries.

E reson est ke primes die
La vertu del noun lucie
. . . . . .
Le noun lucie si est pris
De lumere cum ieo ay apris
Dunt sa vie acord al noun
E ceo verrez par double resoun
Lumere est nette sanz ordure, . . .
etc.

STE. LUCIE

Ki prist le noun de margarite
Ceo est une pere preciouse
Blanche e petite e vertuouse
Dunt ele out bien le noun

STE. MARGUERITE

[4] *Hist. Litt. de la France*, XXXIII, 328, in the alphabetical list under the names of the saints.

De margarite par cele resun
Ke blanche esteit par chastete
E petite par humilite
E vertuouse en treble manere
Cum treis vertuz ad la pere
Vertu pur sanc estancher
Vertu encuntre passiun de quer
E vertu ke le espirit
Mult comfort dit le escrit.[5]

It goes without saying that many of the prologues contain a partial or incidental use of these same themes, which I have here illustrated in direct use. With reference to certain of these themes, Paul Meyer, speaking of rhymed prologues, says: "Ces vers expriment avec une facilité commune des idées banales. On n'y trouve rien qui s'applique particulièrement aux Pères du desert—"the subject of the prologue under discussion—"rien qui ne puisse être dit à propos d'un ouvrage d'édification quelconque"—"la parabole du talent enfoui . . . maintes fois utilisée par de pieux trouvères et les développements sur la vanité des biens de ce monde sont un lieu commun très rebattu."[6] This is certainly true, for the mass of prologues show a conscious effort, however clumsy, to find a parable or a proverb which may naturally lead up to the life of the saint in question.

To sum up this section, the introductory material consists usually of stereotyped remarks on the virtue of edifying literature, on the decline in public morality or on the vanity of this world. Comparatively few prologues use a parable or a proverb which applies to the life of the saint. One uses his introductory matter to suggest that the laborer is worthy of his hire. Two poems by the same author use etymologies to lead into their subjects. Two others, possibly also by the amateur etymologist, lead their audiences on by promising novelties.

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[5] Cf. Studer and Evans, *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries*, Paris, 1924, p. 108. The prose lapidary there reproduced gives "Le sainc esclairet del cor e a ceo que cuer tremblet, sin ostet la neir cole (bile)". Almost every possible virtue has been ascribed to the pearl in different lapidaries, the most common being that it is good for "mal des oilz". The prose lapidary published by Studer and Evans, as noted above, is the only one which I have seen that corresponds even partially to our poem.

[6] *Hist. Litt. de la France*, XXXIII, 294.

IV

References to Sources

The most common element in the prologues is the reference to the source from which the life is taken. This reference is rarely definite and specific; the author is usually content to refer to his source simply as Latin. For instance:

> En romanz voil dire un petit
> De ceo que nus le latin dit . . .
>
> ST. NICHOLAS

> L'escriture dist et espont . . .
>
> ANTECHRIST

> Or vos dirai selon l'escrit
> De Deu lo pere Jhesu Crist
>
> HISTOIRE DE MARIE ET JESUS

This reference to a Latin source must not be regarded as a mere verbal flourish. The modern editors of our texts have made positive identifications of these sources in more than half the cases; in the others, the basis is undeniably Latin, and the presumption is that we have lost the ms. actually used by the French translator.

Having found his story in a Latin manuscript, the author is convinced of the absolute truth of it, and tells us so in clear terms:

> De sa vie dire volon
> La verite selonc la lettre
> Si com la vraie estoire est faite
> Cil qui maint jour fu ses compains
> Fist le livre sachiez de voir
>
> ST. DOMINIQUE

(And in fact, the Latin life, to which the author refers, is identified by the editor as the version by Jourdain, successor of St. Dominic.)

Theophilus fu un clerc bien letre
. . . . . .
Il escrit sa passion et toute la verite

STE. MARGUERITE

Similarly, the authors protest vigorously that they are not going to lie:

Si cum jo l'ay escrit truve
Vus voil dire la verite
Ne ja de ren n'y mentiray

ST. PATRICE

San mentir, la certenete

LES TROIS MARIES

Par garant d'escreture ira
Si ne vous en mentira ja

ST. PAUL (VISION DE)

The citation of a written source, the description of their work as "verité" and the assertion that they are not going to lie, form the most characteristic elements of this part of the prologue. The fact that very often, as modern criticisms have shown, they then proceed to relate things that never happened does not alter the fact that, for them, what they told was the truth. It would be unjust to judge them by any other than their own standards. The whole conception of historical truth and the function of the historian in the Middle Ages must be borne in mind when dealing with this subject.

To begin with, the critical examination of sources was unknown in the Middle Ages. We know, says Delehaye[1], that Gregory of Tours, writing on the martyrs and confessors, at the dawn of the Middle Ages, had at his disposal copious materials. In making a selection from these sources, which ones did he choose? The very ones we should be tempted to reject, by reason of the preponderance in them of the miraculous. The same choice was

[1] *Legends of the Saints*, p. 77.

made by the author of the Golden Legend, and with the same results. What must we conclude from this fact? Simply, I believe, that they did not approach their work in the same spirit as a modern hagiographer would. The modern considers himself as a historian, and, therefore, bound by good faith to employ all the refined technique which enables us, as we think, to distinguish the false from the approximately true. This is the spirit in which, we moderns conceive, history should be written. But history and the historian in the Middle Ages were quite differently regarded.

Among the inheritances from the Latin which helped to form the medieval mind, was a classification which placed history in the domain of rhetoric. History for the middle ages was an art and the historian made selections from the sources as became an artist, that is, he chose those incidents which made his narrative more interesting, or dramatic, or touching, or majestic, according to the general tone which he had set for his work. That part of history which we call biography was always rather a panegyric than anything else, that is, the author was not unbiased, as we should expect him to be nowadays. He therefore set out with the intention of *illustrating*, by chosen examples, his preconceived idea of the virtues of his hero. One of our lives shows signs of this feeling:

> Et, se ge ay de rien mespris,
> Saint Gregoire, li ne ses pris,
> N'en est de rien amenuisie
>
> ST. GREGOIRE LE GRAND

If he did make a mistake, he was careful that it should be on the right side, that is, that it should redound to the honor of his patron. This was his critical method, nor did it seem strange to him, for whom all written sources were equally authoritative, the Bible and dogma apart.

The Bible, that is, the canonical Scriptures, and those writings which contained the fundamental dogmas of the Church, had been separated very early from the rest of religious literature, which was classified simply as edifying, and issued under no

formal guarantee whatever. The Bible and dogma *commanded* the belief of the faithful—pious legends might be believed or might not, as the individual pleased. Certainly the mass of the people believed them to the letter, for the trend of the age was towards belief; yet there were doubters.[2] It was to these doubters that the recurring assertions of truth and denials of lying were addressed. We find them so often that it is unlikely that they were not supposed to answer in advance the objections of the incredulous. The pious biographer believed in his composition, but he knew perfectly well that his audience was aware that it was in no sense canonical, that they were not obliged to believe, and he therefore impresses on them, with all possible emphasis, that they should believe what he is saying, on the ground that it is true.[3] *Qui s'excuse, s'accuse*, and their protestations leave us cold, although we must admit that from their point of view, they were stating what they regarded as truth.

We need not regard them as forgers—although there were some among them—nor as liars—they too were represented—we can generally take them at their face value and consider them as humble, pious men, limited and naïve, who delighted in the marvellous, and who had no conception of historical method, as we understand it. Above all, they were simple and credulous, and the simple and credulous we have always with us.[4]

Here is an illustration of how an author introduced a poem based on the canonical Scriptures:

> . . . vous dirai de cel seignour
> Qui tuit apelent creatour
> Le glorieus anoncement
> *Se l'escripture ne nous ment*
> Et coment il vint a nessance . . .
> . . . . . .
> Garant en ai a l'escripture
> Qui touz jours dit verite pure
>
> JESUS

[2] Cf. Langlois, *La Vie en France au Moyen Age*, and Mary M. Wood, *The Spirit of Protest in Old French Literature*, New York, Columbia thesis, 1917.

[3] Petit de Julleville, *Langue et Litt. Française*, I, 18, and the review of it in the *Analecta Bollandiana*, Vol. CVI, cf. Delehaye, *loc. cit.*

[4] Cf. Nicolas, *Les Evangiles Apocryphes*, Paris, 1866: in the introduction. he draws an interesting parallel between the credulity of the Middle Ages, and the credulity of the modern peasant concerning the Napoleonic legend,

Another version of the same poem, finding perhaps that "Se l'escripture ne nous ment" should be corrected more promptly changed the reading to:

Qui vous diray de cel seignour
Que tuit appelle creatour
Le glorieus anoncement
Se l'escripture ne nous ment
*Mais toute est l'escripture vraie
*Voulentiers que vous retraie
Coment il vint a sa naissance
. . . . . .
Garant en ay sainte escripture
Qui touz jours dit verite pure

JESUS

The idea of lying haunts them still. Here is an excerpt from a fuller development of the theme:

Qui a voir dire met s'entente
Il n'est mie mestiers qu'il mente
. . . . . .
Il n'est mestiers c'om mente mie
Pour faire a verite aie

JESUS

Two other examples that I shall give illustrate prologues of a highly individual character, which do not fit into the general lines observed in the others we have considered, the first, by its flippancy and neglect of any documentation, the second, by the extreme care with which the life is documented:

Crestiens se viaut antremestre
Sans rien oster et sans riens mestre
De conter un conte par rime
Ou consonant ou lionime
. . . . . .
Qui les estoires d'Angleterre
Voudroit ancerchier et anquierre

. . . . . .

An trouveroiz a Seint Esmont
Se nus m'an demande le non
La l'aillie quierre se il viaut . . .

ST. GUILLAUME, ROI D'ANGLETERRE

Note the careless tone with which Chretien undertakes his work, which turns out to be a highly apocryphal tale. This attitude on the part of the author makes Gaston Paris doubt whether "Crestiens" can be identified with Chretien de Troyes.[5] Förster, however, has included it in his edition of the complete works of Chretien de Troyes.[6] At the end of the poem, Chretien says that he heard the story orally.

The prologue of the life of St. Thomas of Canterbury by Guarnier de Pont St. Maxence is too long to give any representative quotations. In it the author goes into the minutest detail concerning his method of gathering information. M. Walberg,[7] Gaston Paris, and other competent judges agree in placing the poem as not later than 1176, *i. e.*, six years after the murder of Becket. Guarnier, on hearing of the death of the saint, set out for Canterbury much as a modern journalist might. There he consulted the Latin lives and eye-witnesses, and prepared a first version by reciting which he supported himself while preparing the magnum opus. Four years passed in research before he produced the poem as we know it. M. Walberg has checked up his assertions regarding sources and finds him honest.

Summing up this chapter, the authors in two-thirds of the cases in which they claim to have used a Latin source, are speaking the truth. Even when modern editors cannot find the Latin life, it seems more likely to suppose that the particular version used by the author has been lost, rather than to list as a conventional flourish a statement which has been proved

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[5] *Esq. Hist.*, p. 148.

[6] Vol. IV, 255 *ss.* The evidence may be resumed thus—the author's name was Chrestien, and the language and date of the poem allow us to suppose that it may have been written by Chrestien de Troyes. Gaston Paris only objected on the ground that it was not a very good poem.

[7] *La Vie de St. Thomas le Martyr*, Lund, London, Oxford, Paris, etc., 1922.

correct by such a convincing majority. Note that it is a mistake, therefore, to assimilate such assertions to the analogous statements made in the epic prologues, where the authors are using a literary convention, as they must have known.[8]

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[8] It seems to me that such source references in the epic prologues indicate an effort on the part of the jongleurs to bring themselves within the limits set by the Church,—"qui cantant gesta principum et vitas sanctorum". If M. Bedier's theory of a clerical origin of the *chansons de geste* is to be accepted, then the resemblance might be due to imitation of the lives of the saints by the epic authors.

V

Opposition to Profane Literature

One of the commonplaces in Old French religious and didactic poetry is the bitter condemnation of jongleurs and of the works they recite.[1] The well-known and often quoted summa poenetentiae condemning all jongleurs except those *qui cantant gesta principum et vitas sanctorum* represents very well the attitude of the Church. The disordered life of these vagrant entertainers and the influence their idle tales had on the people were not, in the opinion of Churchmen of the time, to be tolerated. It is not surprising, therefore, that our authors give expression to this antipathy in their prologues.

It will be noted in the examples that follow, that all secular literature is not put on the same basis. The condemnations are aimed particularly at love-stories and novels of adventure. The *chanson de geste*, while thought to attract too much attention, to the exclusion of more profitable things, is not definitely condemned, as are *fabliaux*. This is quite understandable, when we consider that in the *chansons de geste*, the Church is generally treated with the utmost respect. The idea of chivalry and the religious ideal are closely connected. Archbishop Turpin takes a heroic part in the Chanson de Roland; Guillaume d'Orange ends his days as a hermit. The knight errant and the monk are combined in the Knights of Malta, or the Knights Templar.[2] So the Church could have no quarrel with the *chanson de geste*.[3]

On the other hand, the Church had declared war on the more disreputable jongleurs who made a specialty of *fabliaux*, *dits*, etc. In her condemnation of these productions, she went, we

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[1] E. Faral, *Les Jongleurs en France au Moyen Age*, Paris, 1910, Chap. II, and App. and Ch. V. Langlois, *La Vie en France au Moyen Age*, p. 146, (and notes).

Fr. De Sanctis, *Storia della Lett. Italiana*, Naples, 1879, I, pp. 87–88: "... il Fratre diviene il Templario o il Cavaliere di Malta, soldato della Fede, e il Cavaliere errante finisce romito e penitente."

[3] Particularly, if, as M. Bedier thinks, the *chansons de geste* were of clerical origin.

should think, too far, since all works dealing with love, adventure, or indeed, anything but *gesta principum et vitas sanctorum* were included. It must be admitted that the jongleurs had taken no pains to ingratiate themselves with the Church. A favorite theme of the ribald authors of the *fabliaux* is the ridicule of the clergy and monks. And so the Church retaliated. It would hardly be profitable, at this late date, to attempt to determine who started first. There, at any rate, the opponents were, and our prologues allow us to observe in what manner the authors of lives of the saints attempted to weaken their traditional enemies.

The first example goes into some detail; the author begins by admitting that he misspent his youth in composing profane literature.

James ne me burderay plus
Jeo ay noun Denis Piramus . . .

He cites the author of *Partonope* as to be condemned.

La matire resemble suonge
Kar ceo ne put unkes estre . . .

and what about "dame Marie"—Marie de France?

Ki en ryme fist e basti .
E compensa les vers de lays
Ki ne sunt pas de tut verays . . .

ST. EDMOND, ROI D'ESTANGLIE

Alas, people praise them. Everybody reads them—"*li rey. li prince, e li courtur, cunt, baron, e vavasur*". His verses, on the other hand, are sensible and true, as you shall see.

Another prologue takes a literal view of things:

Se chil qui les romans ont fais
Des outrages et des mesfais
Eusent leur sens apreste
A dire de divinite
Moult eusent esploitie mieus . . .

ST. JEAN BOUCHE D'OR

For him, obviously, *romans d'aventure* usually meant sin. Another is principally concerned about lying, and delivers a long disquisition on the subject before beginning his story. As it happens, his own tale is highly apocryphal, though touching, but that is not his fault, for he took it from the Latin:

Li autre trouveor, qui truevent,
Et a *armer lor san espreuvent
Ou fable ou conte d'avanture
De vertei dire n'ont il cure
Mais de la manconge avant traire
Por ce qu'il veulent as janz plaire
Por ce que miauz plaist a la jant
Lor est assez plus bel et jant
Une fable en romans trouver
Qu'a voir lor engin esprouver
Lou bien laissent por la folie

Note his contempt for those who pander to the popular taste. He continues: "It is certainly the Devil who persuades them to tell such lies. But let them beware! Lying kills the soul. For my part, I intend to mend my ways."

Ne vel pas de fable paller
Ne mon tans en folie user.

ST. PAUL (VISION DE ST.)

After warning his lay colleagues that they are headed straight for Hell, he weakens his warning somewhat by disclosing the fact that the souls in Hell, at the intercession of St. Paul, were granted one day of rest a week.

Another is specific in his condemnation:

Les fables d'Artur de Bretaigne
E les chançons de Charlemagne
Plus sont cheries e meins viles
Que ne soient les evangiles
Plus est escoute li jugliers
Que ne soit saint Pol ou saint Pierre
E plus est hui cest jor li fol
Oiz que saint Pierre ou saint Pol.

ST. GREGOIRE LE GRAND

*rimer?

The comment of M. Paul Meyer on this prologue is worth quoting: "les auteurs ecclésiastiques qui s'efforcaient de faire échec aux romanciers profanes sur le terrain de la littérature vulgaire, avaient souvent plus de bonne volonté que de talent. Aussi craignaient-ils, non sans quelque raison, les railleries. Frère Angier n'était pas sans appréhension à cet égard. Il prévoit qu'on trouvera à reprendre dans son oeuvre, et d'avance il se défend contre les attaques de ceux qu'il appelle les "envieux" —de nos jours il eût dit les critiques—leur opposant, selon l'usage, un inaltérable dédain."[4]

Criticism is discounted in advance by discrediting the probable critic.

Certain heroes of the *chansons de geste* were, as we know, taken over by the hagiographers of the Middle Ages. Such confusions occurred in the case of Viviens,[5] and also with Ami et Amile.[6] Our author based his story of Ami et Amile on a Latin text, and consequently makes the usual assertions of absolute veracity . . . "De trueffle ne voil mie parler . . . Si com en escrit le trovai." He abstains from any remarks on the vanity of profane composition.

Another condemnation (by implication, at least):

> Ne, ja, sachez, ne parlerun
> Ne de Tristram ne de Galerun
> Ne de Renart ne de Hersente
> Ne voil pas mettre m'entente
>
> LES SEPT DORMANTS

The authors of the *chansons de geste* are again reproached with lying "a grant plente";

> Kar ge le vus di seurement
> Meuz vaut oir ici entour
> Ke de la geste paenur
> De Guercedin e de Saisons

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[4] *Rom. XII*, 152.

[5] L. Saltet, *Bull. de litt. ecclés.*, Institut Catholique de Toulouse, 1903, J. Bedier, *Les Légende Epiques.*

[6] See the Bollandists, October 12th.

Deu enemis e felons
E d'autre tens pur verite
U l'em vus ment a grant plente
Ki aime e ot la vanite
Deu li en (set mut) de malgre.

STE. OSITHA

Another takes particularly to task *fables*, *tençons* and chess.

Ce valt plus que conter fables
Esches *iver ou a tables
Ou sourdent sovent tencons
E autre mesprisiouns
De ce parler lerrai atant
E ma reson dirrai avant
*joer? ST. PATRICE (LE PURGATOIRE DE ST.)

The trouveres and jongleurs find special disfavor.

Une gent sont qui vont contant
De cort a autre et vont trovant
Chançonetes, mos et fabliaus
Por gaaigner les biax morsiaus
Mais je pris petit leur afaire

ST. PAULIN, EVEQUE DE NOLE

This concludes our list. To resume, here are the types of literary composition mentioned: *lays*, *romans*, *fables*, *contes d'aventure*, *chançonetes*, *mots*, *fabliaus*, *chansons de geste*, *serventeis rimes*, *saluz*, *sonez*, which seem to cover the ground pretty thoroughly.

The compositions mentioned by name are: *Partonopé*, *Lays* of *Marie de France*, *Chansons de Charlemagne*, *Chanson des Saisnes*.

The proper names mentioned: Artur de Bretaigne, Tristram, Galerun, Renart, Hersente, Guercedin.[7]

To sum up, the authors of the lives of the saints speak with contempt of profane literature, qualify it as false, and warn their listeners not to allow themselves to fall under its spell.

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[7] ?

VI

The Author and His Profession

Generally speaking, the authors with whom we have to deal are not much concerned with the technique of their craft, or, if they are, they maintain silence on the subject. A few of them deserve close attention, however, for when their reserve is broken down, they hide nothing. But before taking these few authors in detail, it will be worth while to consider those who make slight mention of such points as differences of language, difficulties of translation, etc.

Remarks on Language

The author of the best life of St. Thomas of Canterbury, Guarnier de Pont St. Maxence, writing in England in 1176, disposes of this question in a single line:

Mis languages est buens, car en France fui nez

Thus, apparently, even at that time, the language of the *Isle de France*[1] was the standard for all French-speaking peoples. The point may have been debated; at least, the author of another life seems to deal with it cautiously. Still, he is firm. After admitting that anyone is liable to make a mistake, and allowing his critics full liberty to correct anything wrong, he makes definite exception of those points which may seem wrong only because the critic is not French.

Ore pri chescun ki lit e ot
Cist treite, s'en aucun mot
Mesprein, k'il amender voile
Kar n'est hom ki ne sumoile
Language par pais varie
Si language de France die
N'en doi estre a droit repris
De gent de veisin pais.

ST. EDOUARD LE CONFESSEUR

[1] On the French spoken in England, see *Rom. XIV*, 279, and *Manchester University French Series, No. III.*

The life was written in England, the subject is English, and it is dedicated to the Queen of England. In such case, the writer could not afford to be too hard on the French of "Stratford-atte-Bowe".

Another mentions the fact that Frenchmen found the rhymes in Norman French disagreeable.

> Un clerc translate avoit
> Mes, por ce que normant estoit
> La rime qui fut faite encois
> Si ne pleisoit mie aus Francois
> Por ce l'a mes amis tramise
> Qu'elle sera en françois mise . . .
>
> STE. CATHERINE D'ALEXANDRIE

Difficulties of Translation

The prologues, on this point, are generally silent. One indicates that critics were on the lookout for mistranslations.

> Et dient li envenime
> "Cest livre n'est pas bien rime",
> Ou, "La translation est fausse".
>
> ST. GREGOIRE LE GRAND

The other example describes the long labor of the translator. He admits that he is not particularly gifted; he has, he concedes, neither the "sens valerien" of Socrates nor the genius of Galen. But he has good intentions.

> Mais bon vouloir me fait sur toute riens
> Mettre en chemin
> Et traveillier au soir et au matin
> Pour departir le françois du latin
> Dont j'ay este las de trouver la fin
> Bien proprement.
>
> STE. MARIE-MADELEINE

None of them express any doubts as to the worth of translations. We have such testimony, however, in a citation given by Paul Meyer.[2]

Elle, (Blanche, comtesse de Champagne), avait prié Adam, abbé de Perseigne, de lui envoyer ses sermons. Celui-ci les lui adressa, avec une lettre où il exprimait des doutes sur l'aptitude de la comtesse à comprendre des écrits latins: à la verité elle pourrait se les faire expliquer, "mais", ajoutait-il, "sache bien, ma fille, qu'un ouvrage traduit d'une langue en une autre perd toute saveur" (Durand et Martene, "Amplissima Collectio, I, 1025) La défiance d'Adam de Perseigne, à l'endroit des traductions n'empêcha point la comtesse de faire faire la compilation," (of Lives of the Fathers of the Church.)

In the prologue to the compilation we find:

N'en ayez cure, douce dame
Leissiez Cliges et Perceval
Qui les cuers tue et met a mal
Et les romans de vanite . . .

Concerning the Learning of Their Colleagues

The author of the thirteenth century version of *Les Trois Maries* does not seem to have any great opinion of the learning of his colleagues, indicating that they neglect their books. He, on the other hand, affects a scrupulous fidelity to his written sources:

Et la somme du parente
Nostre Dame sainte Marie
Que plusieurs clers ne sevent mie
Car es livres garde ne l'ont . . .
. . . . . .;
Seignor, onc mais en escrit n'ai
Trové son nom, si m'en terai . . .

LES TROIS MARIES

[2] *Hist. Litt. de la France*, XXXIII, 295–296.

The author of the life of Pope Clement gives more detail; he admits the learning of the clergy, but of what value is it?

Li clerc de scole, ki apris sunt
Tant que aukes entendant sunt
Mult se peinent de livres faire
E de sentences en lung traire
Que pur mustrer lur saveir
Que pur los del siecle aveir
Livres funt tut de nuvel
Si s'adubbent asez bel
Bel escrivent e bel les ditent
Mes li lai poi i profitent
E clerc i sunt poi amende
Ke en lettrure ne sunt funde
Li clerc meisme ki funt ces livres
Prest ne sunt ne delivres
De faire as nun-lettrez aprendre
E en vulgar comun entendre
Que ceo seit que il unt dit
En lur livres que unt escrit
Kar ceo lur suffist asez
Que de autres clers seient loez
E que ceo peusse estre dit
"Bons clers est ki si escrit"
Pur ceo que fous est tel purpens
De si dispendre en nient bon sens
E pur ceo que livres sunt asez
Ki bien suffisent as lettrez
. . . . . .
(for this reason he aims to reach
the common people)
. . . . . .
Ne sui pas de ces lettrez
Ki en clergie sunt fundez
Nepurquant cel poi que sai
De si escrivre en purpos ai
Que clerc e lai qui l'orrunt
Bien entendre le porrunt . . .

ST. CLEMENT, POPE

This idea is of course one of the most frequently expressed in the popular literature of the Middle Ages. Learning should be put to use, and learning for learning's sake was nearly a sin. There is a pious tale in verse in the *Tombel de Chartreuse*,[3] which relates the story of a young student at Paris, who, by hard work, became deeply versed in logic. He had:

> Sur touz les autres excellence
> De bien respondre et d'arguer

Unfortunately, he had a dispute one day with Death. All his subtlety and sophism were of no avail, for Death

> . . . fait telx sillogismes
> Qui concluent par droite force.

The student dies and goes to Hell, and, as his punishment is given a gown to wear, made of parchment and inscribed in minute letters with all the vain knowledge in whose pursuit he had wasted his days. On a visit to his old professor, he discloses his plight and declares that each letter on his gown is like a heavy stone hung around his neck. His old "regent maistre", struck by this apparition of poetic justice, renounces his chair and retires into a monastery, although we read that he was "D'escoliers forment amé."

The admirable Guarnier de Pont St. Maxence takes, as usual, a rational middle ground.

> Tuit li fysicien ne sunt ades bon mire;
> Tuit clerc ne sevent pas bien chanter
> ne bien lire
> Asquanz des troveurs faillent tost
> a bien dire
> Tel choisist le nualz ki le mielz
> quide eslire
> E tel quide estre mieldre des altres,
> est li pire.
>
> ST. THOMAS DE CANTORBURY

[3] Extraits de plusieurs petits poèmes, etc., Desroches, *Caen*, 1839.

The last line seems to advise a seemly modesty, a monastic virtue which the author himself cannot be said to practice, for in another line he says of his own work—"Ainc mais mieldre romanz ne fu fez ne trovez."

Another, author of a life of St. Brendan, holds knowledge in high esteem but is indignant because many charlatans, with nothing but the tonsure to recommend them, pose as real "clercs". He adds that if the tonsure had anything to do with it, he would gladly exchange his hair for knowledge. The prologue is to the *Image du Monde* containing a life of St. Brendan.

> . . . Maint clerc ce font ore haut tondre
> Qui petit savroient respondre
> A nul mot de droite clergie
> . . . . . .
> Cil est clerc qui clergie entent
> La tonsure n'i fait niant
> Se tonsure bon clerc faisait
> Ja chevols ne me remendroit
> Car volontiers les changeroie
> A clergie, se je puoie
> . . . . . .
> Clers est li plus haus noms qui soit
> A home qui lo sens avroit . . .
>
> ST. BRENDAN

The picture presented by these varying testimonies is not too far removed from our own experience for us to understand it without comment.

The Authors and Their Critics

There is no doubt that our authors belonged to the *genus irritabile vatum*. Those who deal with critics at all, deal with them violently, regarding them, as St. Jerome did, as unnecessary pests. One of them even quotes the stormy and choleric Jerome with approval:

Et dient li envenime
"Cest livre n'est pas bien rime"
Ou, "La translation est fausse",
Et, vont devisant de la sausse
Qu'elz ne sauroient destremper
Telz gens ne sceivent atremper
Leurs langues; feu d'enfer les arde.

The author has lost his temper. But he has good cause. People criticize and then, when you take them to task about it, they pass it off as a joke.

Tel langue blesche et point et larde,
Puis dit que ce ne sont que gogues
Et saint Geroisme en ses Prologues,
Se plaint trop et se va clamant
De tel langue et si diffamant
Et telz langues acomparage
A chiens aboiaus pleins de rage

Poy me chaut de telz ennemis . . .

He continues—If I have put anything in that oughtn't to be there, a wise man will take the good and leave the bad, and God knows I have interpreted it piously, . . .

Selon ma petite science
Dieu m'en gart de malivolence
Quer j'ai fet ce que j'ai peu.

ST. GREGOIRE LE GRAND

Guarnier de Pont St. Maxence again keeps his head. He does not adopt a resentful attitude, or speak plaintively of having done the best he could. He does indeed say that he has done his best, but he goes on to say that anyone who disagrees with him is a liar. His calm confidence is refreshing after so much humility. He begins by suggesting preventive methods against criticism.

Si nuls voelt contruver u traitier u escrire
De bien se peint, que nuls n'en puisse rire
U par alcune rien s'uvraine descunfire;
Mette le sen avant e li mals seit a dire
Del bien amende l'um e nuls huem n'en empire

ST. THOMAS DE CANTERBURY

This is certainly sound advice, and Guarnier is so confident that he has followed it that he says in his epilogue:

E ço sacent tuit cil qui ceste vie orrunt
Que pure verite par tut oir porrunt
E ço sacent tuit cil qui del saint traitie unt
U romanz u latin, e cest chemin ne vunt:
U el dient que jo, contre verite sunt.

Guarnier is rather offensively self-confident. However, it must be admitted that he had produced a remarkable work, by the care with which he had collected the material, and the skill with which it was used.

Another is not disposed to hide his light under a bushel. In this case, we seem to hear rather the jongleur speaking than the author. His method of disarming criticism is to shout it down.

Ge vos en dirai tel parole
Dont j'ai este a bone escole
Onques certes meillor n'oistes
Ne onques home ne veistes
Qui vos peust dire meillor
De Jhesu Crist nostre seignor . . .

JESUS (HISTOIRE DE MARIE ET JESUS)

One is frankly indifferent to criticism.

L'estorie est definee ici
Que translatee avon brefment
E se nul la velt autrement
Traiter, il ne m'en peise mie
Ainseis me plaist, que mielz la die

ST. TOBIE

If we are to take this author seriously, he almost welcomes correction. So also does another:

> Ore pri chescun ki lit e ot
> Cist treite, s'en aucun mot
> Mesprein, k'il amender voile
> Kar n'est hom ki ne sumoile.
>
> ST. EDWARD THE CONFESSOR

Another adopts the same attitude, this time to excuse himself for adding his name. It is difficult to say how seriously we can take his assertion that he only does so in order that the public may know whom to blame for the mistakes.

> Everard de Gatele ay noun

I tell you this so that you may pray for me, and—

> . . . Pur ceo que, si jeo mesprenge
> En ceste overaigne, saunz losenge
> Soit le meffet sur moi tourne
> Que autre ne soit nul blame
> Car si jeo mesprenge de rien
> Jeo le vodrai amender bien . . .

A rather pathetic resignation is evident in these lines in a prologue which begins by a wistful reference to "Cil trouveor qui biaus dis truevent" . . . "Dient por contes et por rois" . . ."Dont il ont robes et lorains." But such things are not for him. He has no longer any illusions on that score.

> Mais jo, qui sui uns povres hom
> Ne ne sui pas de grant renon
> N'estre nel doi, al dire voir
> Car jo n'ai pas tant de savoir
> C'on doie mie en grant pris metre . . .
>
> ST. JULIEN L'HOSPITALIER

Candor could go no further nor any critic find anything to add.

The last testimony we shall consider under this heading is in the prologue to a life of St. Mathurin. St. Mathurin was almost

a Parisian saint. His relics were preserved at Larchant, near Fontainebleau, and attracted, apparently, favored by the proximity of Paris, large pilgrimages. To satisfy the natural curiosity of the pilgrims, the village curé composed a biography of the saint. He opens clearly and honestly:

> Et si sui de la ville prestre
> Et si sai auques par mesure
> Du francois et de l'escripture . . .
>
> ST. MATHURIN

References to Technical Devices

The words "rimer", "rime", arimoier", etc., occur often in the prologues. Guarnier de Pont St. Maxence is specific in his description of his poem:

> Li vers est d'une rime en cinc clauses coplez
>
> ST. THOMAS DE CANTORBURY

The advantages of rhyme and rhythm are disclosed as follows:

> Et en sera a ceulx plus chiere
> Pour qui elle est en rime mise
> Car le vulgal les rimes prise
> La mesure dedens enclose
> Leur delite plus que la prose
>
> TOMBEL DE CHARTREUSE

But it has its disadvantages also, as another author points out:

> Seigneurs qui en vos livres par maistrie metez
> Equivocations et leonimetez
> Se ie tel ne puis faire, ne deprisiez mon livre
> Car qui a trouver n'a soultil cuer et delivre
> Et leonimete veult par tout aconsuivre
> Moult souvent entrelest ce qu'il devroit ensuivre
>
> STE. CHRISTINE

Before closing this chapter, it will be interesting to examine the picture given us by Guarnier de Pont St. Maxence of a medieval author at work. Not that Guarnier is representative of the authors of the lives of the saints. He may be or he may not be; none of the other authors gives in detail his methods as Guarnier does. It is more than probable that he was not. But the composition of a saint's life is so often described as a mechanical adaptation of the Latin that some such corrective as Guarnier is needed to remind us that criticism and investigation, within the limitations of the times, existed in the middle ages as well as today, when a contemporary subject was treated.

"Guarniers li clers del Punt", as he describes himself, was born in France and was living there when Thomas à Becket was murdered. This news was of the greatest interest to him. He had seen Thomas à Becket when the latter was in Normandy, and we presume admired him, as would be natural in a "clers", for Thomas was fighting the battle of the Church against the royal power. Perhaps he saw in the universal interest the martyrdom of the saint had aroused a chance to write a popular poem. At any rate, he composed a life at Pont St. Maxence from hearsay—Primes traitai d'oie—and he admits that it was inaccurate—*suvent i menti.* Dissatisfied, he set out for Canterbury and there established himself and began to gather material, from the friends of St. Thomas and those who had known him in his childhood. Thus he undertook, he tells us, the difficult labor of "oster et remettre". A first version of his poem was soon ready, and while he continued working on the definitive edition, which he began in 1172, he recited the first draft until it was stolen from him by some scribes. This causes him deep regret, although he admits that it was neither complete nor entirely accurate—"*par lius est mençungiers et sans pleneirete.*" Yet it was mostly true and "*cil en deivent estre, qui l'emblerent, blasme*"; especially as many rich men bought it—"*meint riche umme l'unt cunquis e achate.*" Finally, after four years' work, he completes the final revision, and he presents the work to the sister of the martyr, who was abbess of a convent near Canterbury. In recognition of the excellence of his work, she presented him with a palfrey and a set of harness, including spurs, a

gift which pleases him beyond measure because he says it suits his mode of life. From this, we may conclude that he was an itinerant trouvère, or a "clericus vagans".

At any rate, his description of his method of working and his results command our respect. We should not think of him, perhaps, as being unbiased—the idea that a historian should be unbiased is hardly a hundred years old—nor would he have wanted us to. His sympathies are frankly with the Church and much of his very long prologue is nothing but an argument for the Church against the usurpations of the secular power. Even the royal messengers are made to speak ridiculous Latin, although his sense of fairness admits that some did quite well.

> Devant le pape esturent li messager real
> Auquant diseient bien, plusor diseient mal
> Li auquant en latin, tel buen, tel anomal
> Tel ki fist personel de verbe impersonal
> Singuler et plurer aveit tot parigal.

These touches and the central idea of his prologue incline us to think that the author made a special effort to appeal to clerical audiences,[4] (cf. E. Faral, *Les Jongleurs en France au Moyen Age*, p. 52). On the other hand, we know that he addressed himself to the pilgrims at Canterbury, and then the poem must have been a powerful agent of what we should call propaganda. We know also that he sometimes called at chateaux, for he tells us of one such occasion. Apparently, he met there with less success, for he admits having been turned away. Whether he was ejected because of his opinions, or whether his opinions were colored by having been dismissed, is a question which we have not sufficient information to answer.

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[4] Cf. E. Faral, *Les Jongleurs*, etc., p. 52.

VII

Personal Indications

The authors of the lives of saints were, in general, rather reserved. Only one out of four of them tells us his name,[1] and even those who tell us their names rarely say much more than that about themselves. The Lives of the Saints, like other popular literature in the Middle Ages, are, for the most part, anonymous. This anonymity is no doubt due to the methods by which literary compositions were spread. It would appear that the scribes who copied a poem did not attach much importance to the name of the author. Since they did not hesitate to substitute their own names, in some cases, it seems likely that they would have no compunction in leaving out altogether the verses naming the author. Especially if the work were old, and the author forgotten or dead, it may well have seemed unnecessary waste of parchment and labor. Thus only the works of such great figures as Wace, Rutebeuf, Gautier de Coinci, etc., would be connected with the names of their authors. We know from what Guarnier de Pont St. Maxence says of the scribes who stole the first version of his poem, that plagiarism might be very profitable, and as the idea of literary property, as we know, did not develop until much later, there was no protection for the author. And for the average composition, offering no pecuniary advantages, protection must have been thought unnecessary, even had it been possible.

In the genre which occupies us, we have to do with another reason, the reluctance of the clerical authors to appear to set any value on the worldly fame which their compositions might bring them. So, when they give their names, they generally accompany them with the explanation that they do so in order that their hearers may know for whom to pray.

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[1] About 67 out of 237.

Cases in Which One Name is Substituted for Another

Ore voil a tei parler que ai fete la chançun
J'ai a non HERMAN, no oblier mon non . . .
MARIE-L'ASSOMPTION

He is addressing the Virgin. Another copy substitutes RICHARD for HERMAN. Similar substitution is to be noted in the ms. D (Trinity College) version of the Life of St. Nicholas, by Wace.

Names Accompanied by Request for the Prayers of the Reader

(Referring to the "Vie" . . . PIERRES qui la mist)
Et traist de latin en romanz
. . . . . .
Et que par son pri Diue souviegne
De celui qui, selonc la leitre
Seut le latin en romanz mestre.
ST. EUSTACHE

Por RENAUT qui a fait l'estoire
En romans si coutoisement
Deprions Deu omnipotent . . .
ST. JEAN BOUCHE D'OR

Similar statements are almost always given when the name is given at all. Other examples are: St. Jean l'Evangeliste (HENRI DE WALLENTINE), St. Josse (PIERRE), Ste. Marguerite (FOUQUES), Ste. Marie l'Egyptienne (RUTEBEUF), St. Thomas de Cantorbury (GUARNIER), same, another version (BENET), Catherine D'Alexandrie (CLEMENCE, NUN AT BARKING), Brendan (BENOIT), Jesus-Evangile de Nicodeme (two versions—CHRESTIEN and ANDRE DE COUTANCES), Les Sept Dormants (CHARDRY), Genevieve (RENAUT), Jesus—Passion (NICOLAIS), Magloire (GEFROI DE NES), Patrice (MARIE DE FRANCE).

When the author's name is given, it is accompanied by the request for prayers which is found at the end of all the lives. Under the heading, Purpose of the Authors, we have seen that

they stress the fact that their object is to edify the people, and not "por los del siecle avoir'.' In this connection, M. Paul Meyer remarks[2] "J'ai fait remarquer plus d'une fois que si beaucoup d'écrivains, auteurs de poésies morales ou religieuses s'étaient nommés dans le préambule ou à la fin de leurs écrits, ce n'était pas par vanité littéraire mais que leur seul but était d'avoir part aux prières de leurs lecteurs." The point seems well established.

It may be, therefore, that the anonymity of the lives of the saints is due to a feeling that a religious should not appear to seek anything but the glory of God, and that it is his duty to labor without thought of himself, effacing himself as far as possible just as did the composers of the thousands of Gregorian Chant Hymns and Sequences.

Some references at the end, with or without giving the name of the author, give the date or circumstances under which the writing of the poem was finished. The greater part of these would appear to have been written either by scribe or author. Here are some examples:

> En l'an mil CCC vint et sis
> U vendredi saint que je sis
> Tout soul a l'oure de complie
> Fust ceste euvre toute acomplie
>
> ST. GREGOIRE LE GRAND

The following example, from its preoccupation with the cos- of living, would suggest a professional writer or scribe, unless the unusual price of grain is cited merely to mark the year:

> L'an mil CCC et vint et deulz
> Que povres furent moult de deulz
> Pour la tres grant cherte de vivre
> Fis ie de saint iehan cest livre
> Sestier de fourment lors valut
> Cent soulz moult petit sen falut

---

[2]Rom. XXIX, p. 27.

Or y vueille dieu conseil metre
Et samour nous vueille prometre
amen.

ST. JEAN BAPTISTE

Others are trivial but quite as human, by their very triviality.

Je Gefroi fiz de livre neuf
L'an mil CCC et dis e neuf
Et le livrai, (bien m'en remembre)
Droit le premier jour de novembre

ST. MAGLOIRE

Some of our authors are careful to impress on their hearers that their work is undertaken at considerable sacrifice. Thus:

Je ne vos en puis or plus dire
Car trop me fait mal a escrire . . .

JESUS—LA NATIVITÉ

Mes mout volentiers, si j'osasse
Quant a present me reposasse
Quer je scey bien que tel estrere
Est a ma sante trop contrere.

But he has promised, and will keep his word . . .

Combien qu'il me doie couster

ST. GREGOIRE LE GRAND

Others, while protesting their willingness, profess fatigue, as a reason for stopping:

Prest sui en autre choses a vostre volonte
Mes, ore, a ceste feiz, voil un poi reposer.

ANTECHRIST

Dont jay este las de trouver la fin.

STE. MARIE-MADELEINE

A promise is a promise, but when one has kept his promise, it is time to stop, says another:

E bien dei estre quite, ço m'est avis
Quant ai enromance ço que vus pramis

PAUL (VISION DE ST.)

This concludes the list of personal references in the prologues.[3] When we consider the mass of material examined, it is obvious the authors of the medieval lives of the saints kept themselves, in general, well in the background.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF EPILOGUE AND PROLOGUE

The material examined so far has been taken both from prologue and epilogue. It may be useful to indicate in a general way, what the prologue contains, as distinguished from the epilogue.

The prologues examined contained one or all of the following divisions:

Plea for silence, invocation of God.

Statement of the value of the lives of the saints and the edifying example they offer.

Reference to source.

Assertion of absolute veracity.

The epilogue, on the other hand, is composed of the following elements:

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[3] The last examples, in which the authors allege physical fatigue and even broken health as a reason for stopping, might throw additional light on the puzzle offered by the l. 4002 of the *Chanson de Roland*. In 1923, R. T. Holbrook published an article in *Modern Philology*, in which he suggested that "Ci falt la geste que Turoldus declinet" might be translated "Here ends the *geste* for Turoldus is on the decline", that is to say, tired, exhausted, or physically unable to continue. One objection to his interpretation has been that no other example could be adduced in which an author gave such a reason for bringing his work to a close. These examples seem to me to support Mr. Holbrook's opinion.

Prayer to the saint whose life is told.
Exhortation of the audience to pray for the author.

Name of the author.

It goes without saying that very few of the lives exhibit all these features. The most constant are the plea for silence, invocation of God, and reference to a written source in the prologue, while the epilogue, in a large majority of cases, consists merely of a prayer at the end of the poem.

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